



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

AFGHANISTAN

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FACT SHEET

USAID Support to Afghanistan's WTO Accession

OVERVIEW

With the support of USAID and other donors, Afghanistan began making rapid progress toward World Trade Organization (WTO) accession starting in 2009. Membership in the WTO will help Afghanistan gain immediate access to 162 export markets, receive equal treatment for their goods, and make Afghanistan more attractive to foreign investors. USAID worked closely with the Afghan government and the private sector to guide Afghanistan through the lengthy, complex journey toward WTO Membership – a process that drives broad legal and institutional reforms to improve a country's business enabling environment and competitiveness. USAID will continue to support Afghanistan in fulfilling its remaining accession commitments and realizing the full benefits of WTO Membership.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Assisted Afghanistan in analyzing the country's legal and regulatory requirements to conform with WTO statutes.
- Helped Afghanistan develop a legislative action plan that includes a timeline to prepare and pass more than 22 draft pieces of legislation by mid-2016, covering areas such as customs reform, trade policy, intellectual property rights, food safety, animal and plant health, and standardization, and the establishment of a half-dozen new institutions including intellectual property offices, a WTO Unit, and notification and enquiry points.
- Assisted in preparing an accession roadmap and guided intensive coordination between Afghan government ministries and with the private sector to prepare for trade negotiations and gain consensus on major legal, policy, and institutional reforms as well as market access negotiations.
- Assisted the Afghan government in preparing complex documents required for WTO accession (more than 30 documents and over 600 questions from WTO Members) and in successfully undertaking accession negotiations with WTO members on market access on goods and services, plurilateral agricultural negotiations, and working party negotiations.
- Built the capacity of the Afghan government on WTO accession requirements, procedures and agreements through training (more than 60 seminars), a study tour to Nepal, observation of a working party meeting in Geneva, and on-the-job training.
- Built awareness of WTO and how accession could impact Afghanistan's economy through delivery of more than 40 awareness events and dissemination of awareness materials to public and private sectors.

CURRENT ACTIVITIES

- Providing technical assistance to Afghan officials championing policy, legal, and institutional reforms to conform to WTO agreements.
- Assisting Afghanistan in drafting trade-related laws for adoption and implementation to create a modern, vibrant trade and investment regime.
- Working with the Ministry of Commerce and Industries, the government's WTO focal point, to educate ministries on WTO commitments and raise private-sector awareness of opportunities.
- Assisting in institutional reforms including development of an advance ruling unit that provides binding customs decisions, a food control authority that improves food safety, and a safeguards unit that offers temporary protection to local industries in case of a sudden import surge.
- Supporting Afghanistan in ratifying WTO accession and notifying the WTO of ratification to become the 164th Member of the renowned multilateral trading organization.
- Supporting Afghanistan's membership in key WTO-related intellectual property conventions to protect the rights of innovators in Afghanistan and around the world.
- Assisting Afghanistan in fulfilling its trade commitments as a WTO Member and adhering to the WTO's multitude of agreements covering goods, services, and intellectual property.